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ABSTRACT

THIS APPROACH TO PRESCHOOL EDUCATION OF THE DISADVANTAGED USES A TEACHER TRAINING PROGRAM WHICH WAS DEVELOPED ONLY AFTER EACH COMPONENT OF THE PROGRAM HAD BEEN EMPIRICALLY TESTED. TEACHERS WERE RETRAINED THROUGH COURSE WORK AND WORKSHOPS TO TEACH DISADVANTAGED PRESCHOOL CHILDREN. THESE TEACHERS THEN TAUGHT MOTHERS AND OLDER SIBLINGS OF DISADVANTAGED FAMILIES THE SKILLS AND KNOWLEDGE NECESSARY TO INSTRUCT THE PRESCHOOL CHILD BOTH IN THE HOME AND IN THE SCHOOL SETTING. PRE- AND POSTTEST SCORES ON STANDARDIZED TESTS INDICATED THAT PRESCHOOL CHILDREN WHO PARTICIPATED IN THE PROJECTS MADE GAINS COMPARABLE TO THOSE MADE BY CHILDREN TAUGHT BY A PROFESSIONAL STAFF. RESEARCH FINDINGS WERE INCORPORATED INTO ONGOING DEMONSTRATION CLASSES AT THE UNIVERSITY OF ILLINOIS. THE CLASSES PROVIDED (1) PRACTICUM EXPERIENCES FOR STUDENTS IN A LEADERSHIP TRAINING PROGRAM, (2) OBSERVATION FACILITIES FOR TEACHER-TRAINING STUDENTS IN ELEMENTARY AND SPECIAL EDUCATION, (3) THE BASIS FOR WORKSHOPS INVOLVING TEACHERS AND ADMINISTRATORS FROM LOCAL COMMUNITIES, AND (4) GUIDELINES FOR JUNIOR COLLEGE PERSONNEL INTERESTED IN DEVELOPING TRAINING PROGRAMS FOR PARAPROFESSIONALS. (AUTHOR/DR)

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A New Role for Teachers: Involving the Entire Family in the Education of Preschool Disadvantaged Children

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A New Role for Teachers: Involving the Entire Family in the Education of Preschool Disadvantaged Children[1]

In our complex society the horizons of the school must extend beyond the confines of the classroom and the traditional notion that only the professional teacher is capable of educating the child is becoming outmoded. In educating the preschool child who is culturally different or socially disadvantaged, it may well be of critical importance to expand the role of school and teacher into the greater community. For these children it is imperative that every educational advantage be provided to enable them to "catch up" with their peers from more privileged homes so that they may progress academically in subsequent years commensurate with their potential abilities.

An approach which represents a departure from the usual role of the schools and of necessity expands the role of the teacher has been developed at the University of Illinois in the College of Education. Contrary to the usual procedure, this teacher training program was developed only after each component had been empirically tested. This innovation involves re-training teachers to teach the members of disadvantaged families the skills and knowledge necessary to instruct the preschool child both in the home and in the school setting.

Description and Development of the Program

Essentially this teacher-training program was developed in six closely related phases. (See Appendix A for more detailed descriptions of these

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[1]This is a part of a larger research and demonstration program partially supported by funds from the U.S. Office of Education, Bureau of Research, Grant 5-1181, Contract OE 6-10-235.

facets of the teacher-training program.)

Phase 1

Professional teachers were retrained through course work and workshops to teach disadvantaged preschool children. This retraining involved the development of curricula and the acquisition of effective skills for teaching preschool disadvantaged children. Various curricular interventions were evaluated in a laboratory setting.

Phase 2

Teachers involved mothers of the disadvantaged in a training program in which they developed instructional materials and learned to teach their preschool child at home. These children were not enrolled in a preschool program.

Phase 3

Disadvantaged children were provided with a preschool experience. In addition, the teachers trained the parents of these children to work with them at home to expand and reinforce the educational goals of the school.

Phase 4

The mothers of young, disadvantaged children were trained to teach in the preschool through intensive inservice training and close supervision.

Phase 5

Teenagers (16 to 18) enrolled in a work-study program at a local high school and living in disadvantaged areas of the city were trained to teach preschool children in the classroom and were closely supervised by a professional teacher.

Phase 6

Teachers trained younger teenagers (ages 10 to 15) to tutor their preschool siblings at home during a summer program.

Objectives

The major objectives of this teacher-training program were:

1. To determine the feasibility of expanding the role of the teacher to involve the whole family in the education of the preschool disadvantaged child. Will the family become involved? Can they learn the essential skills to teach the young child?

2. To determine the worth of the expanded role of the teacher in terms of pupil growth. Will the children progress when taught by paraprofessionals?

3. To develop more definitive plans for retraining teachers in this expanded role of training the entire family to teach preschool children.

4. To make it possible to serve larger numbers of preschool children by teaching professionals to use their competencies to greater advantage by training paraprofessionals to serve as teachers.

5. To employ and train teenagers and adults from disadvantaged neighborhoods and to enhance their occupational potential.

Personnel Involved

These pilot projects designed to test components of an innovative teacher training program involved only limited personnel: a director, an educational specialist who served as the assistant director, fourteen teachers who were retrained in the various programs, and seventy-one members of families involved in the training programs as paraprofessionals who taught children in the classroom or at home.

Budget

The budget (Appendix B) includes those costs involved in teacher-training projects and their evaluation and does not reflect the expenses of the larger research program.

Contribution to the Improvement of Teacher Education

Teachers were retrained to function in an expanded role which involved training members of families in disadvantaged neighborhoods to instruct their preschool children. Teachers, in interview-evaluations, recorded that they had gained a greater insight into the special needs of the disadvantaged child and his family and had enhanced their abilities to work and relate effectively. Teachers also felt that training family members sharpened their own teaching skills. Teachers were enthusiastic about their participation in a broader educational enterprise.

These pilot projects at the University demonstration center had influence far beyond the fourteen teachers retrained. Research findings were incorporated into on-going demonstration classrooms which provided a practicum setting for graduate students in a leadership training program.[2] These demonstration classes also provided opportunities for students in elementary and special education teacher training to observe appropriate educational programs for the young disadvantaged child. Junior college personnel interested in developing curricula for paraprofessionals also obtained help at the demonstration center. Aspects of these programs have been replicated in various communities, demonstrating the growing interest in working more effectively with the entire family. Many teacher-visitors to the program acquired sufficient knowledge and insight to enable them to expand their

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[2]The demonstration classrooms and the leadership training program, directed by Dr. Merle B. Karnes and Dr. Queenie B. Mills, Child Development and Family Relations, College of Agriculture, are supported by the Office of Economic Opportunity.

roles. The Columbia Broadcasting System included one of the parent training projects in a program, "From Cradle to Classroom," featured on Twenty-First Century. A local television station presented a program on the project involving mothers as classroom teachers. This film was made available to the center and has been shown at the national convention of the Council of Exceptional Children and to various groups within this and neighboring states.

Evaluation

All programs were designed to control important variables and were evaluated on a pre- and post-intervention basis (Appendix A). The results of this teacher-training program indicate that parents, older siblings, and even younger teenagers can develop the skills and knowledge essential to teach preschool disadvantaged children when taught and supervised by a teacher operating in an expanded professional role. In fact, the preschool children who participated in these pilot projects made gains on the standardized tests which compared favorably to those made by children taught by professional staff.

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APPENDIX A

Project Descriptions and Evaluations

In the early spring of 1965 a series of four pilot teacher-training projects were begun at the Institute for Research on Exceptional Children, College of Education, University of Illinois, projects designed to train teachers within an expanded educational framework and to evaluate the effectiveness of intensive family involvement upon the intellectual and language development of the young, disadvantaged child. Although the number of teachers who received training in these pilot projects was necessarily small, the encouraging evaluation data support the premise that a redefinition of the role of the teacher of young, disadvantaged children may be of critical importance in assuring academic success for these children.

I. Training teachers to work with mothers of disadvantaged preschool children.

In the first project, the young children did not attend preschool. Instead, their mothers attended eleven weekly two-hour sessions conducted at a neighborhood elementary school by project teachers. Mothers, as part of the teaching team, were paid $3.00 a session for their participation but received no remuneration for the time spent working with their children at home. At the beginning of each session the mothers, with teacher help and direction, made educational activities from inexpensive materials to use the following week in teaching their young children at home: a sock puppet, a flannel board, lotto and matching games, counting and classifying scrapbooks. In addition, children's books and puzzles were available on a lending library basis. A discussion of appropriate ways to use these materials at home followed each work period. Teachers discouraged the view that they were authorities from whom directions issue and worked to achieve cooperative planning and to incorporate suggestions from the group. During a coffee

break, mothers informally reported on their success or difficulty with the previous week's teaching assignment. They discussed differences among their children and ways to adapt materials to accommodate such differences.

Teachers made home visits to provide materials made by the group for mothers who had been absent, to help individual mothers who appeared to have teaching problems, and to evaluate the appropriateness of the activities by observing mother and child at work. Because each mother had made her own instructional materials and understood their use, she approached the teaching of her child with confidence. She could readily observe the progress of her young child, and both mother and child were immediately rewarded for their mutual efforts. The intellectual and language development of the children whose mothers participated in the training program was compared to that of a control group in which neither mothers nor children were involved in an educational program.

In the fall of 1967, the mother-training project was expanded and incorporated into an existing preschool program for disadvantaged children. Again, mothers were paid $3.00 a session to attend weekly, two-hour meetings with the preschool teachers of their children. Teachers encouraged mothers to feel that their assistance was needed to support and extend the educational goals of the preschool. At the beginning of each meeting the mothers again made materials to use during the following week in teaching their children at home. Generally, materials were chosen to reinforce content currently being taught at the preschool -- materials which emphasized language development, basic manipulative skills, and math readiness concepts. A discussion of appropriate ways to use these materials at home followed each work period.

When a mother was absent, the other mothers made the materials for her and the teacher delivered these and the instructions for their use the following day.

Classroom dynamics were conspicuously altered by the support which school activities received at home. Early in the year, children spontaneously and proudly brought the activities back to school to show their teachers what their mothers had made for them. Children were delighted to perform at school tasks similar to those which their mothers had taught them at home.

II. Training teachers to train mothers as preschool teachers.

In the fall of 1968, a second teacher-training pilot project was begun in which teachers developed a technique to train as preschool teachers the mothers of young disadvantaged children. The benefits from this phase of the teacher-training program were seen in broader terms than altered family attitudes or improved school achievement. Hiring (while training) personnel indigenous to disadvantaged neighborhoods not only provides the educational program needed for the disadvantaged child but also provides employment for people living in the target areas. Indigenous personnel in positions of respect and authority can intensify the impact of educational programs in poverty areas. Finally, sufficient professional personnel simply do not exist to carry out the educational aspects of the war on poverty.

The paraprofessionals in this project, three young Negro mothers, had no previous teaching experience and no education beyond high school. The paraprofessional later rated the most effective teacher had terminated her education at the eighth grade. These three women worked under the general supervision of a professional teacher and under her particular supervision during a lesson planning session before class began and an evaluation session after class was dismissed. Although the supervising teacher assumed the responsibility for the overall program and for the specific lesson plans to be used in implementing the structured curricula described in the enclosure on page of this appendix, the paraprofessionals did all teaching. Concepts unfamiliar to the paraprofessional were carefully presented by the supervising teacher before such materials were taught to the children. Role playing was often used to transmit lesson plans, with the professional and the paraprofessional teachers taking turns as pupil and teacher. As might be anticipated, the immediate problems of "discipline" were often

discussed during the evaluation periods. The value of well-planned lessons at the child's level and the merits of praise and success in preventing discipline problems were stressed.

The supervising teacher evaluated the performance of her paraprofessional staff on a rating scale (page 16) three times a year and discussed these ratings with the women individually. In addition, since this class was established according to a research design used in earlier studies, the progress of the children taught by supervised paraprofessionals could be compared with that of children taught by a professional staff. Table I presents the data which indicates very comparable performances by the two groups. Both groups made significant progress.

Table I

The Progress of Children Taught by Paraprofessional Staff (Mothers) Compared with that of Children Taught by Professional Staff

Teachers	N	Test 1	Test 2	Difference	t	Level of Significance
		Stanford-Binet Intelligence Quotient				
Professional	27	96.0	110.3	14.3	11.54	.001
Mothers	17	93.4	105.9	12.5	5.26	.001
			difference	1.8	.72	NS
		Illinois Test of Psycholinguistic Abilities Total Language Age Difference Scores*				
Professional	27	-3.3	+ 3.0	6.3	7.53	.001
Mothers	17	-5.5	- 1.1	4.4	2.58	.02
			difference	1.9	1.12	NS
		Frostig Developmental Test of Visual Perception Perceptual Quotient				
Professional	27	80.7	99.1	18.4	6.90	.001
Mothers	17	79.4	99.5	20.1	7.00	.001
			difference	1.7	.43	NS
		Metropolitan Readiness Test Total Raw Score				
Professional	27		54.7			
Mothers	17		51.2			
		difference	3.5		.95	NS

*ITPA Language Age scores are reported as the difference in months between the group mean ITPA Chronological Age and the group mean ITPA Total Language Age.

III. Training teachers to train a teenage paraprofessional preschool staff.

A third project, again involving paraprofessional staff, employed sixteen- and seventeen-year-old sisters of young, disadvantaged children as preschool teachers. These teenagers were enrolled in a high school work-study program and fulfilled their work commitment at the preschool. The structured curriculum referred to earlier again constituted the instructional program; again a supervisory teacher assumed the responsibility for general goals and specific lesson plans and conducted planning and evaluation sessions before and after class. Teenage paraprofessionals presented problems which the supervising teachers had not encountered in the program which employed mothers as paraprofessional teachers. The school schedules of the teenagers often interferred with adequate preplanning and evaluation periods. The commitment to the program shown by teaching mothers was not shared by the teenagers who saw little relevance in this experience to their own occupational future. Their experience with young children was, of course, more limited. The attendance of the teenagers was not as good as that of the older women.

Since this class was also established according to the research design of the earlier studies, the progress of the children taught by the teenage paraprofessional staff can be compared with that that of children taught by professional staff (Table II). It will be noted that the results of the two groups are essentially comparable. Both groups made significant progress.

Table II

The Progress of Children Taught by Paraprofessional Staff (Teenagers) Compared with that of Children Taught by Professional Staff

Teachers	N	Test 1	Test 2	Difference	t	Level of Significance
		Stanford-Binet Intelligence Quotient				
Professional	27	96.0	110.3	14.3	11.54	.001
Teenagers	16	90.3	104.6	14.3	7.35	.001
			difference	0.0	0.00	NS
		Illinois Test of Psycholinguistic Abilities Total Language Age Difference Scores*				
Professional	27	-3.3	+ 3.0	6.3	7.53	.001
Teenagers	16	-6.9	- 2.6	4.3	2.75	.02
			difference	2.0	1.52	NS
		Frostig Developmental Test of Visual Perception Perceptual Quotient				
Professional	27	80.7	99.1	18.4	6.90	.001
Teenagers	16	74.3	98.1	23.8	7.22	.001
			difference	5.4	1.28	NS
		Metropolitan Readiness Test Total Raw Score				
Professional	27		54.7			
Teenagers	12**		48.8			
		differences	5.9		1.23	NS

*ITPA Language Age scores are reported as the difference in months between the group mean ITPA Chronological Age and the group mean ITPA Total Language Age.

**Four children in this group were too young for this test.

IV. Training teachers to train teenagers as summer tutors of their preschool siblings.

In spite of the qualified endorsement of the teachers who had been trained to work with the teenage paraprofessionals the fourth pilot project, a six week summer program, again involved teenagers from disadvantaged homes. In this instance, the teenager brought his young sibling (in some instances of an extended family living in the same home, a cousin, niece, or nephew) to the preschool for an hour's structured program conducted by experienced teachers. Activities scheduled there were chosen from the structured curriculum described earlier. Each teacher worked with three preschool children during this hour, introducing new material and providing a teaching model for the teenagers to observe. She then involved the teenagers in teaching their own sibling or the group of three young children. Take-home materials to review and reinforce the activities presented at school were distributed to the teenager to use in teaching his preschool sibling for an additional hour a day at home. The teenager was paid for the hour at school and for the hour of work at home each day. Teachers made two visits to each home during the six week program to help the mother understand the school program and to solicit her support of the teenager's efforts at home.

The progress of the children taught in the summer by sibling-tutors was compared to that made by the children taught for eleven weeks by their mothers at home (Table III). Both groups made significant and comparable progress.

Table III

Binet IQ and Illinois Test of Psycholinguistic Abilities
Total Language Age Difference Scores* for Two Groups of Children
Participating in Family Involvement Programs

Group	Intervention Description	N	Test 1	Test 2	Difference	t	Level of Significance
Mothers as teachers at home	Child did not attend preschool. Mother attended 11 weekly meetings to make instructional materials to use with her child at home. Bi-weekly home visits by the teacher. Test interval: 13 weeks.	11	Binet				
			89.6	97.6	8.0**	2.63	.05
			ITPA				
			-7.9	-2.7	5.2**	2.66	.05
Teenage siblings as summer tutors	Teen and preschool sibling attended daily one hour preschool sessions for 6 weeks and worked an additional hour at home each day. Test interval: 6 weeks.	12	Binet				
			91.0	101.2	10.2	3.11	.01
			ITPA				
			-6.9	-1.3	5.6	2.87	.02

*ITPA Language Age scores are reported as the difference in months between the group mean ITPA Chronological age and the group mean ITPA Total Language Age.

**There were no significant differences between the gains of the two groups in either Binet IQ or in ITPA Total Language Age difference scores.

RATING SCALE FOR PARAPROFESSIONAL TEACHING STAFF

A. Relationship with Children

1. Shows interest in children, their spontaneous activities and conversation.
2. Is able to relate sincerely and naturally with children.
3. Shows understanding of child's point of view
4. Handles children:
   a. Pleasantly but in a business-like manner
   b. In a consistent manner.
   c. Without getting cross.
5. Gives the kind of encouragement and recognition that spurs effort.
6. Is enthusiastic and helps to make the school experience interesting and satisfying for the children.

Excellent	Good	Fair	Poor	Comments

B. Relationship with Teacher

1. Follows Instructions:
   a. Is attentive to instructions about lesson plan, teaching methods, discipline, etc.
   b. Is receptive to suggestions about these.
   c. Profits from these suggestions and puts them into action.
2. Is able to communicate problems to teacher and ask for help.
3. Has enough self-confidence to enter into give and take conservation about program, children discipline etc.

Excellent	Good	Fair	Poor	Comments

C. Grasp of Program and Her Role

1. Understands that teacher and child are working together to help the child get ready for school learning.

Excellent	Good	Fair	Poor	Comments

Rating Scale For Paraprofessional Teaching Staff (condt.)

	Excellent	Good	Fair	Poor	Comments
2. Sees discipline as a way to help the child grow toward his potential rather than as punishment for something he has done wrong.					
3. Thinks of herself, her attitudes, actions, and words as having an effect on each child's development.					
4. Gives her full attention to the teaching assignment at hand.					
5. Can organize her materials and her group so that she can work effectively:					
a. Sequences material.					
b. Presents material in steps small enough for the children to follow.					
c. Presents concepts in a variety of ways and reviews them frequently.					
d. Utilizes opportunities for relevant transfer of learning.					
e. Provides immediate correction whenever possible.					
f. Tries to follow through with each child.					
6. Is able to see the possibilities in the materials, and situation and use them to good advantage.					
7. Is able to provide a suitable model:					
a. In activities when needed.					
b. In general conversation such as at juice or bus time.					
c. In standard, informal English.					
8. Is able to see need for continuous evaluation of each child's progress.					

D. Commitment to Job and Program	Excellent	Good	Fair	Poor	Comments
1. Feels responsibility for being on the job or telephoning when impossible to come.					
2. Feels responsibility for being on time.					

Rating Scale For Paraprofessional Teaching Staff (condt.)

	Excellent	Good	Fair	Poor	Comments
3. Takes planning and instruction period seriously as an opportunity to learn how to do a better job.					
4. Takes assigned duties seriously and gives them her full attention.					
5. Is able to see beyond her assigned duties and take the initiative in doing other things that need to be done.					
6. Willingly and responsibly performs "housekeeping" tasks in the nursery.					

APPENDIX B

Budget

I.	Pilot Mother Training Program (11 weeks) (Children not attending a preschool)	
	a. Professional Teachers (3) $5.00 an hour, 4 hrs. a week for 11 weeks	660.00
	b. Instructional Materials	100.00
	c. Mothers (15 experimental, 15 control) $1.50 an hour, 2 hrs. a week for 11 weeks	495.00
	d. Psychological Testing of 30 children	600.00
II.	Pilot Program Training Mothers to be Teachers in the Classroom	
	a. Professional Teacher (9 months)	5400.00
	b. Paraprofessionals (3) $1.50 an hour, 4 hrs. a day for 42 weeks ($1260.00 per paraprofessional)	3780.00
	c. Psychological Services $50.00 a child (15 children)	750.00
III.	Pilot Program Training Older Siblings to be Teachers in the Classroom	
	a. Professional Teacher	6500.00
	b. Older Teenagers (3) $1.50 an hour, 4 hrs. a day for 42 weeks ($1260.00 per paraprofessional)	3780.00
	c. Psychological Services $50.00 a child (15 children)	750.00

Budget Continued

IV.	Pilot Program Training Younger Teenagers to be Tutors of Young Siblings (6 weeks)	
	a. Supervisor (½ time)	600.00
	b. Teachers (½ time) (3)	1200.00
	c. Teenagers (20) 2 hrs. daily, $1.50 an hour for 6 weeks	1800.00
	d. Psychological Services $50.00 a child (20 children)	1000.00
	e. Instructional Materials	100.00
V.	Mothers Training Program Combined with Classroom Program	
	a. Mothers (30) $1.50 an hour, 2 hrs. a week for 42 weeks	10,584.00
	b. Teachers' salaries, transportation of the children, and classroom expenses were included in the budget of a larger project.	
	TOTAL	$38,099.00